

I.Q., RACE AND PUBLIC POLICY

"What happens if the child has my beauty and your brains?" George Bernard Shaw's response to a well known actress who had suggested that he father her child on the grounds that it would have her beauty and his brains.

*"The great masses of the people.... will more easily fall victims to a big lie than to a small one."
Adolf Hitler*

*"Our worst enemies are not the ignorant and the simple, however cruel; our worst enemies are the intelligent and the corrupt."
Graham Greene*

*"The freedmen were not really free in 1865, nor are most of their descendants really free in 1965. Slavery was but one aspect of a race and color problem that is still far from solution here, or anywhere. In America particularly, the grapes of wrath have not yet yielded all their bitter vintage."
Samuel Eliot Morrison*

*"That a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies,
That a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright,
But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight."
Alfred Lord Tennyson*

Introduction:

The notion of superior and inferior groups as differentiated by gender, race, ethnicity, religion, nationalism, tribalism, economic class and the so-called highborn aristocracy seems to be as old as humankind. In the past, exactly how a group was superior or inferior was never clearly spelt out. A cursory examination of most of the rhetoric espousing such a view indicates that, usually, it is based on fear accompanied by ignorance, superstition, bigotry and economic deprivation.

It appears to be a manifestation of what can be called the "We -They Syndrome". We are superior because: we are the good folk; we have God on our side; God has ordained that we be powerful and wealthy; we are the intelligent and intellectual elite; we are physically superior both from an athletic and aesthetic point of view; we have contributed more to humankind than any other group; we have been victimized; anyone who does not share our beliefs is dangerous; and of course we are militarily superior. On the other hand, they are inferior because: they are ugly, stupid, evil, dangerous, parasitic, barbarian, pagan, weak and guilty of deicide; they are dangerous because they wish to mongrelize us and bring us down to their level. These views can be singularly inconsistent: under the rubric of inferiority, "they" can still be cunning or sly and dangerous, yet weak and moronic.

Human beings have a primary, psychological drive to belong to and identify with groups. This need may be biologically based. We feel secure within a group which welcomes us, and whose members resemble us physically and mentally. It is the way we are. The compulsion to imbue our group (be it our race, our ethnic origin, our nation, our clan or tribe, our family, our religion or credo, our class, gender, etc.) with positive attributes is probably due to a cultural imperative. Somehow, we feel that we have to justify our membership in that group. If the group is superior, so are we. Of course, the converse can be also be true. Minorities that are viewed as inferior by the majority over a long period of time can come to believe in their inferiority and behave accordingly.

These minorities can react against such feelings and become as racist or as bigoted as any other group.

There never has been any real rational underpinnings to the notion that certain groups are innately superior or inferior to others. These views are irrational and very subjective. However, in a democracy such as ours, citizens are entitled to their opinions and have a right, within certain limitations, to express them. This does not translate into the right to impose unsubstantiated views on others. More importantly, these convictions should not shape public policy. Unfortunately, this frequently has not been the case. The most tragic example is governments' decision to go to war. War is often the product of a dispute over economic resources, such as land, water, mineral resources, channels of transportation, etc., but it is nearly always fueled by rampant nationalism, racism and religious differences. (For example, one can only speculate whether nuclear weapons would have been used against Germans too if the war against them had lasted substantially longer.)

Of course, similar reasons have been and probably still are being used to justify slavery and the vicious exploitation of visible minorities and in some cases majorities, e.g.; black Africans in South Africa and North America; women in underpaid jobs and as chattel in a wide variety of countries; Aboriginals in South America; Orientals who literally built our North American railway system; Mexican peons in US agriculture; and immigrants who toiled in sweat shops. This fuel persists as the modern manifestation of the "We-They Syndrome". No one is immune from these horrific disorders, as any objective examination of the wars and various economies of the 20th century would disclose.

Recently, Murray and Herrnstein, Shockley, Burt, Rushton, Jenner, et al., have raised anew the specter of race-intelligence by trying to lend scientific credibility to the notion of the inheritance of intelligence and to supposed racial disparities of intelligence. They have suggested changes in social policy to adequately reflect interpretations of such work. The social, economic and political implications of these findings are enormous and bear careful, critical examination, discussion and debate. What follows is a cursory examination of some of these notions. Imputing these personages and their judgments is a reflection of the biases of the author of this essay, for which he is totally unapologetic.

Race, Intelligence and Science:

The introduction of science into the debate over race and intelligence probably originates with Darwin's Theory of Evolution. Science's role was further enhanced by Mendel's Genetic Theory, Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory, the discovery of DNA and the means of altering that molecule, the corresponding development of a host of psychological tools such as the I.Q. Test, the improvement of statistical techniques, psychometry, and the appreciation of the roles of physiology, biochemistry, anatomy, neurobiology, histology, etc. to understand and compare the biologics of all forms of life on this planet.

While much has been learnt, there remains far more to discover about all aspects of life. The one incontestable fact that has been established, one that still remains a very bitter pill for many to swallow, is that human beings are animals, fundamentally no different from all others and subject to the same biological laws. As there are distinctions between differing species of animals, so it is with humans, compared to other animals.

One of the consequences of such an idea is that if humans are animals, then they can be altered genetically and improved by specific breeding as with horses, pigs, domestic pets, cattle and fowl.

At least with these animals we have some idea of the desirable characteristics that we wish to propagate. Genetically altering humans appears to be a two-edged sword. It is certainly enticing to try to eliminate all genetically based diseases or the propensity to acquire them, so that we are all hale and hearty. Furthermore, it would be nice if all humans were beautiful in appearance and demeanor as well as intelligent, competitive in a non-destructive fashion and creative. Perhaps with the new techniques of genetic engineering this will become possible.

However, with the old way of simply breeding out disagreeable traits, the danger exists that some very desirable traits such as genius and creativity could also be eliminated. In any case, all this gave rise to the very suspect science founded by Galton and called "Eugenics". It aspires to improve the human race. Therefore, those who subscribe to such an ideal must have an idea of what constitutes a superior as opposed to an inferior human being. In this essay we will deal with only one related quality, namely intelligence, to which we will return shortly.

Perhaps a more invidious consequence of Darwin's theory was the birth of a political ideology known as Social Darwinism. Walter Truett Anderson in his book "To Govern Evolution", very adequately deals with it in the following fashion:

"The central idea of Social Darwinism was the "survival of the fittest", which became a rationale for unfettered capitalism, imperialism, and racism. Wherever there was an individual with greater power or wealth than others, or a nation or a race gaining ascendancy over another, Social Darwinists took it to be the healthy working-out of the laws of nature to the eventual betterment of society as a whole."

"The Social Darwinists prided themselves on the tough mindedness of their world view, and generally opposed actions by government that would interfere with the necessary 'weeding out' of unfit individuals. Most Social Darwinists had little use for the life sciences except as a convenient resource bank from which could be drawn un-examined political doctrines useful to reinforce a strongly individualistic view of life in the modern world."

"Despite Social Darwinism's overlay of progressivism in its reverence for technology and enterprise, it was essentially a regressive doctrine that tried to reduce human activity to the same set of rules which -so went the general belief at the time- applied to the realm of nature. Social Darwinists underestimated the extent to which human activity shaped the social environment. They wanted to believe that free-market capitalism was the 'natural' order of things; they looked away from all the evidence that it was in fact a vast body of theory, nourished by myth and theology (the famed Protestant Ethic) and maintained by the power of governments."

Thus it is not hard to perceive how the idea that humans are fundamentally animals, that they can be made better, that only and properly the fittest amongst them survive or are in positions of power and wealth, could be used to promulgate the doctrine that intelligence is a biological characteristic, genetically and racially distributed and that those who have it are superior to those who do not. Superficially, there does not appear to be much wrong with this set of beliefs. However, one of the fatal flaws in this argument has to do with that very elusive term, "intelligence".

What is intelligence? It would appear that like "beauty" it may be in the eye of the beholder and depend upon the circumstances in which someone's intelligence is being evaluated. For example, would a Kalahari Bushman consider himself more or less intelligent than an Inuit or a well educated citizen from one of the so-called industrially advanced nations if they were stranded together in the middle of the desert and depended upon him for their survival? Are creative people who have no sense of the practicalities of life, intelligent? Are those who lack the ability to express

themselves well because of their ignorance of language, less intelligent? Are those who are handicapped by personality, psychological pathology and physiology, less intelligent? Are those who have profound thoughts but express them slowly and respond slowly to stimuli, less intelligent than those who are superficially verbose and respond quickly? How is intelligence perceived, through lenses that have been shaped by social, economic and cultural values?

While the preceding questions are mainly rhetorical, the issue of what we mean by intelligence remains. Many terms such as beauty, truth, love, hate and time, are rather difficult to express with words, yet, within a given culture, they appear to be understood non-verbally in more or less the same fashion by most. It would appear that intelligence falls into this category. Yet if we are to differentiate people by it, we need to define it better. For example, is it a single or multi-faceted characteristic? If the former, how is it defined? If the latter, does it include one's analytical, linguistic, conceptual, creative, manual and comportmental abilities, together with one's dexterity, speed, strength, experience, education and wisdom? In either case, we are left with a term commonly employed, but not clearly understood. For the scientist this is an anathema.

There is a very strong scientific predilection for accurate measurement. It is one of the cornerstones of science. It provides most of the empirical data that scientists need for their interpretations and hypotheses about what they are examining. It is also the basis for experiments that are used to verify a hypothesis and convert it into an acceptable theory. However, to measure there must be means to do so, and an entity that is very clearly definable and measurable. Often, scientists have found that words fail them when they try to define such a characteristic. Very neatly, they have side-stepped this problem by coming up with what they have labeled "operational definitions:" defining a measurable trait by the means with which it is measured. This works very well in the hard physical sciences such as physics and chemistry. Scientists, euphemistically, tend to dismiss traits such as beauty, and love that are admittedly important as non-quantifiable variables. It is the contention of this author that while many human characteristics can be measured precisely, intelligence, as yet, is not one of them. It is not for a lack of trying.

Years ago, a definition of intelligence commonly accepted by the psychologists of the time, was that it consisted of one's ability to internally manipulate externalities. The next step was to devise a means of assessing this ability. After, presumably many iterations, the result was the currently adopted Stanford-Binet Intelligence Quotient Test (I.Q. Test). Without a doubt, a certain mental agility is needed to do well on this test. However, what it measures and with what precision, is very debatable. Yet there are those who claim that what it measures is intelligence. By this reasoning, a definition of intelligence is that intelligence is what an I.Q. Test measures. There is, perhaps, no better illustration of an operational definition. In this case, it is a very questionable one. What can be asserted without debate is that an I.Q. test measures how well or poorly one does, when being subjected to an I.Q. test.

The issue would be less debatable were it left at that. Then, of what use would it be? The problem arises with the oft stated assertion that those who score high on an I.Q. test are more intelligent than those who do not, and thus are superior, with greater chances of success in their personal and occupational lives. This does not account for those who are born with a silver spoon in their mouths and fails to recognize that because society takes its shape from those who are successful, they therefore are deemed superior. It would be a questionable blessing if ever we could identify ahead of time, those who have the innate traits leading to affluence, achievement, good fortune, power and authority, those who are destined to be criminals, destitute and abject losers, and then all those in-between. Most such attempts have failed, as witnessed by the frequent failures of our penal, parole and educational systems. It may well be that those who are viewed as successful on average score higher, but the reverse is not necessarily true. It would be of interest to ascertain

the percentage of those viewed as unsuccessful, who do well on I.Q. tests. In any case, it is this so-called predictive ability of the test that is scientifically very questionable, especially when race and intelligence are linked in a very redoubtable equation. The following four reasons are offered.

1. Intelligence comprises many parameters which very likely, are all inextricably linked to each other in unknown ways. It can be viewed as a sort of ecology, where changes in some variables can affect the whole in unforeseen ways. As a natural ecology rests upon a complex shifting equilibrium, so does intelligence. For example, is it not possible that one's intelligence, however measured, can be altered by altering the educational process or by a change in an individual's motivation, or by a change in one's health, and, by extrapolation, the group's? Thus at best, a rigid standardized test can provide nothing more than a snapshot of a varying situation. Moreover, should any such test not reflect the complexity and intricacy of intelligence? How can it, when it reduces intelligence to a limited number of unconnected parameters? Also, how can the measure of intelligence be based on essentially one test, no matter how objective it purports to be? It can be argued that when attempts to measure intelligence are undertaken, they should be performed over a reasonable period of time and at the very least comprise an assessment of how fast and well one learns; how curious one is; how critical one is; how conformist one is; and how one relates to authority and power.

2. Self-Image Psychology, a not so new development, tells us that human comportment, behavior, achievements, attitudes, personality, educational examination results, etc. are very strongly influenced by the image that people have of themselves. While most supportive evidence is of an anecdotal nature, much success has been achieved in turning destructive behavior around, by managing to change the self-images of those afflicted with poor ones. A good example is the case where school teachers were given classes of average students but were told that the students were top notch. It is no surprise that these students did far better than ever before, even when independently assessed by the educational authorities who had set up the experiment.

If there is veracity to this idea, is it any wonder that a group of people who were brought to the North American continent by force and in bondage, who were disconnected from their culture, home base, history, tribal identity, family, who were subjected to a culture and language foreign to them, who were constantly demeaned by being reminded of their sub-human status -fit for only the most menial of tasks because they were stupid and ugly -, and who were bombarded by the most degrading of racial epithets, would tend to have a negative self-image and behave in a manner consistent with it. It is truly a wonder that many Afro-Americans have overcome this stigma.

Even after emancipation, things did not change much. African Americans migrated into urban areas where the negative aspects of their existence were accentuated by the horror of slum life, leading to a feeling of helplessness and despair, and subsequently frequently to crime. It is not surprising that they did not do well with I.Q. tests. After all, they knew they were supposed to fail them since this was the white man's way of confirming their inferiority.

They were denied access to good schools, good jobs, polling booths, etc. because of the policy of segregation which isolated them from the mainstream in just about every way possible, even though they had made some major contributions to American culture, especially music. Hollywood, one of the strongest of cultural icons, portrayed them in a most patronizing and insulting manner until some breakthroughs in the 1950s. It was in the field of athletic endeavors where sports pioneers like Jack Johnson, Joe Louis and Jackie Robinson provided an image enabling them to feel superior, that they rose to heights never thought possible a few years earlier. Today, many if not most African-American youth aspire for greatness in the field of professional sports because they see themselves as being capable of achieving it. Needed are role models encouraging

African-Americans to see themselves on a par with others in their ability to achieve in a wider variety of human endeavors. More Martin Luther Kings, Malcolm Xs, George Washington Carvers, Nelson Mandelas, Scott Joplins, Paul Robesons, Leontyne Prices, Jesse Jacksons, Richard Wrights, Thurgood Marshalls, Ed Bradleys, etc. are required. Perhaps the rise of an affluent and well educated middle class will produce more of these role models. Centuries of debasement having left an indelible scar may then be expunged, making a difference in the manner in which many, if not most African-Americans live and behave, and lessening the relatively new and growing racist reactions of some. It will take time; and patience.

3. The recent development of "Chaos Theory" calls into question the predictive capability of any system where the number of variables is very high and where many of these variables are of the non-quantifiable type. (Recently published books on Chaos Theory such as the ones by Gleick and Peate provide useful information.) The multi-faceted nature of intelligence, together with the day to day variations in an individual's make-up could affect her/his I.Q. test results, making them not as reproducible as they should be according to scientific criteria. The variability of her/his social, economic and cultural environment makes predicting the future of that individual a near impossibility. If this is true for an individual, the accuracy of predictions based on the same tests must be diminished by many orders of magnitude for ethnic or racial collectivities.

4. Karl Popper, the noted philosopher of science, developed widely accepted criteria for determining whether findings and interpretations purporting to be scientific are indeed so. One of the most critically important is the "Falsifiability Test". Essentially, it obliges anyone developing a theory or hypothesis to explain the relationships between certain distinct parameters based upon an examination of empirical data, to set up one or a number of experiments demonstrating that the interpretation is false. If the theory cannot be proven false, it then is found to be acceptable. In this manner it is impossible to validate the hypothesis that variations in the results of I.Q. tests are due to intelligence being racially or ethnically based. Thus, there is no scientific basis for asserting that certain races or ethnic groups are superior or inferior to others. The interpretations of related raw data are open to much heated discussion and debate.

Summarily, it is a truism that we are not genetically equal. Individuals, the genders, races and ethnic groups are all biologically different. Many of these distinctions are obvious, especially those that can be physically and biochemically measured. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe that as with individuals, races do not differ mentally. They probably do. What is contentious is so-called scientists labeling various ethnic or racial collectivities, inferior or superior. This is not scientific. It simply reflects the values of those who make such assertions. It is particularly sad when such unsubstantiated opinions, based solely on prejudices, affect public policy. This bears further comment.

Public Policy:

Let no one think that public policy, in particular at both the political and bureaucratic levels, has never been influenced by questionable notions emanating from a so called desire to improve the human stock. Racism certainly has existed and in some rather stark instances still does as witnessed by current examples of ethnic and racial cleansing in the former Yugoslavia and in Africa. There are numerous precedents for these activities. For example, American immigration laws in the early part of this century were strongly influenced by the Eugenics movement that had a great deal of power in the Congress. Immigrants deemed undesirable found it next to impossible to enter the U.S. because of the American elite's fear of mongrelization. A similar phobia was at the core of Nazi philosophy leading them to ruthlessly eliminate Jews, Gypsies and mentally

retarded people. The irony is that measures to maintain racial purity and desirable human characteristics can achieve just the opposite because in-breeding as opposed to cross-breeding often has deleterious effects.

The questions and issues surrounding the formulation of public policy are so numerous and complex, that justice cannot be done to that topic in an essay of this brevity. However, some specific principles should be heeded in a democracy such as ours:

All citizens are born equally free; all are equal before the law;

All have an equal opportunity for a successful life;

All have an equal voice in the halls of power;

and finally, government is the servant of all the people, not only a selected few.

Keeping these principles in mind, here are a brief number of relevant generalities about public policy.

- No governmental policy can be considered adequately without also examining the total complex mosaic of policies. Each, one way or another, affects and is affected by all the others.

- Usually, government policies reflect the ideological bias of the political party in power. Objective data with accompanying interpretations are often given credence only when they support those biases.

- Frequently, there is no or very little consistency between government policies.

- Often, policies are ad hoc, based upon political expediency. These have little logical connectivity with the supposed ideology of the party in power. (This is probably a good thing.)

- In a liberal democracy such as the one we have in Canada, there is a natural and ongoing tension between the rights of the individual and those of the collectivity. On numerous occasions, policies are a compromise between the two.

- Finally and perhaps most importantly, there are always winners and losers associated with the promulgation and enforcement of policy initiatives. Usually the losers are the poor, the disenfranchised, the minorities, the ignorant, and those without any or little political clout.

In conclusion and in keeping with the subject matter of this essay, here is a brief, but for each a different comment on three policy areas, namely welfare, education and health care delivery.

1. It has been suggested that welfare for single mothers, who often belong to a very visible racial minority, dilutes the quality of the gene pool with respect to intelligence. This also presupposes that the fathers are less intelligent. Even if, on average, that were true, there would still be amongst them biological parents equally or more intelligent than the rest of the population. Withdrawing support would be akin to throwing the baby out with the bath water. In any case, there is no evidence that single mothers or their biological partners are any less intelligent than anyone else. That there is a problem with a welfare system that appears to encourage single girls to become mothers is obvious and needs to be addressed. However, the strawman of intelligence should not be used in the draconian manner that has been recommended pseudo-scientifically.

2. Affirmative action in education offers certain minorities advantages not available to others. For example, under this program, standards required to be met by those minorities for entry into schools of law and medicine, etc. are less stringent than those generally required. This has come under strong attack and with some justification, since it may be a case of reverse discrimination.

Also, it seems to patronize those receiving such advantages by bolstering the notion that they cannot compete with others because they are inferior. On the other hand, it makes up for a long history of wrongs done to those minorities; it may ultimately raise their self-esteem to a point when the policy will be no longer needed; and finally, hopefully those graduating successfully will provide essential services, otherwise not available, to the members of their own community.

3. Since many tests have indicated that there is a relationship between one's health and one's intelligence, it is evident that removing quality health care from a certain segment of the populace will diminish their observable intelligence and will provide untenable credence to the belief that they are inferior. There is a circularity to this argument. They are medically disadvantaged because they are inferior; and they are inferior because they are medically disadvantaged. Any policy that lessens the amount of quality health care, in turn causes a diminution in the quality of health and will also affect the quality and amplitude of intelligence in a given populace. The probable long term results of such a policy are horrific and totally unacceptable.

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It probably would have been intelligent on my part not to have attempted to write this essay. It is doubly foolish to admit having done so and triply to show it to anyone.

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